

DISPLAY DEVICE FOR PROJECTING AN IMAGE ALTERNATIVELY ONTO A REMOTE SURFACE AND A REAR PROJECTION SCREEN

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates in general to combination rear projection displays and projectors and, more particularly, to a display device for projecting an image alternatively onto a remote surface and a rear projection screen.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Rear projection display devices and projector display devices are useful for displaying images and video streams. Examples of their uses include television and presentations. Although these two types of display devices are similar, they are not identical. It is often desirable to have both a rear projection display device and a projector display device in order to take advantage of the best qualities of each.

[0003] Owning one of each type of these display devices is more expensive and requires a larger amount of space than owning only one of these devices. Many times, this requires consumers of display devices to choose between having a rear projection display device and having a projector display device. Once the choice is made, the consumer is unable to take advantage of the best qualities of the device not chosen, unless the consumer acquires that other device.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] According to principles of the present invention, in one embodiment, a display device projects an image alternatively onto a remote surface and a rear projection screen. The display device has a base, a projector, a rear projection screen, and a mirrored surface. The projector is affixed to the base. The rear projection screen is mounted on the base. The housing extends rearward of the rear projection screen and has an opening formed therein. The mirrored surface is angled to reflect light from the projector onto the rear projection screen. The rear projection screen and the housing are pivotal on the base. In one position, the projector is exposed for projection onto the remote surface. In another position, the projector is engaged within the opening for projection through the opening at the mirrored surface.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] Figure 1 is a front orthogonal diagram illustrating a first position of one embodiment of the present invention display device for projecting an image alternatively onto a remote surface and a rear projection screen.

[0006] Figure 2 is a front orthogonal diagram illustrating the display device of Figure 1 with a collapsed housing.

[0007] Figure 3 is a front orthogonal diagram illustrating a second position of the display device shown in Figure 1.

[0008] Figure 4 is a front orthogonal diagram illustrating a retracted position of the display device shown in Figure 1.

[0009] Figure 5 is a cross-sectional illustration of one embodiment of the display device in the position shown in Figure 1.

[0010] Figure 6 is a cross-sectional illustration of one embodiment of the display device in the position shown in Figure 3.

[0011] Figure 7 is a flow chart illustrating one embodiment of the present invention method for converting a display device from a rear projection display device into a front projection display device.

[0012] Figure 8 is a flow chart illustrating one embodiment of the present invention method for converting a display device from a front projection display device into a rear projection display device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0013] Figures 1-6 illustrate an embodiment of display device 2. Display device 2 selectively projects an image onto remote surface 4 and rear projection screen 6. In one embodiment, display device 2 includes rear projection screen 6, housing 8, mirrored surface 10, projector 12, and base 14.

[0014] Rear projection screen 6 is any screen useful for receiving a projection on one side and transmitting the projection through to its other side. Rear projection screen 6 is any suitable size. Examples of suitable sizes range from 30 inches to 40 inches. Although, other sizes may be suitable as well. Rear projection screen 6 is

mounted on base 14. In one embodiment, rear projection screen 6 is detachable from base 14.

[0015] Housing 8 extends rearward of rear projection screen 6 and encloses mirrored surface 10 and one side of rear projection screen 6. Housing 8 is collapsible. Housing 8 is either constructed of a collapsible material or configured to fold onto itself to collapse.

[0016] Projector 12 is affixed to base 14 and concealable within housing 8 through opening 16. In one configuration, projector 12 projects into housing 8 through opening 14 onto mirrored surface 10. In another configuration, projector 12 projects onto remote surface 4. Remote surface 4 is any suitable distance from projector 12 and projector 12 projects an image of any suitable size onto remote surface 4. Examples of suitable sizes include 80 inches and over. Although sizes of less than 80 inches may also be suitable.

[0017] In one embodiment, projector 12 includes lens 18. Lens 18 is adjustable to focus selectively on rear projection screen 6 and remote surface 4 depending on the configuration of display device 2.

[0018] Base 14 is any suitable structure for supporting projector 12, rear projection screen 6 and housing 8. The Figures represent only one exemplary structure, a foldable "L" shaped structure, for base 14. Many alternative structures are also suitable for base 14. Additionally, base 14 may be further collapsed, as shown in Figure 4, for portability or storage.

[0019] In one embodiment, display device 2 further includes a handle 19. Handle 19 is mounted in any location on display device 2. Examples of locations suitable for mounting handle 19 include housing 8 and base 14. Handle 19 allows display device 2 to be conveniently carried.

[0020] Rear projection screen 6 and housing 8 are pivotal on base 14 for selectively exposing projector 12 for projection onto remote surface 4 and engaging projector 12 within opening 16 for projection through opening 16 at mirrored surface 10.

[0021] Opening 16 is formed in housing 8. Opening 16 allows projector 12 to project into housing at mirrored surface 10.

[0022] Mirrored surface 10 is any light reflecting surface. Mirrored surface 10 is disposed within housing 8 and angled to reflect light from projector 12 onto rear projection screen 6. Although only one mirrored surface 10 is illustrated in the Figures, any number of mirrored surfaces 10 may be used to channel the light from projector 12 onto rear projection screen 6. Additionally, mirrored surface 10 may be attached at either or both ends of mirrored surface 10.

[0023] In one embodiment, display device 2 further includes support structure 20 for mirrored surface 10. Support structure 20 is any device or system configured to support mirrored surface 10 within housing 8. Examples of support structure 20 include tracks and tethers. In one embodiment, support structure 20 is collapsible within housing 8. Although illustrated on only one end of mirrored surface 10, support structure 20 may be at either or both ends.

[0024] Figure 7 is a flow chart representing steps of one embodiment of the present invention method for converting display device 2 from a rear projection display device into a front projection display device. Although the steps represented in Figure 7 are presented in a specific order, the present invention encompasses variations in the order of steps. Furthermore, additional steps may be executed between the steps illustrated in Figure 7 without departing from the scope of the present invention.

[0025] Support structure 20 for mirrored surface 10 is collapsed 22 within housing 8 of display device 2. The exact means for collapsing 22 support structure 20 depends on the nature of support structure 20.

[0026] Housing 8 of display device 2 is collapsed 24. Housing 8 is removed 26 from around projector 12. In one embodiment, removing 26 housing 8 from around projector 12 includes pivoting rear projection screen 6 and housing 8 on base 14. In an alternate embodiment, removing 26 housing 8 from around projector 12 includes removing rear projection screen 6 and housing 8 from base 14.

[0027] Additional optional steps may be implemented. For example, in one embodiment, lens 18 of projector 12 is adjusted 28 to focus on remote surface 4. In another optional step, an aspect ratio of projector 12 is adjusted 30 between 4:3 and 16:9.

[0028] Figure 8 is a flow chart representing steps of one embodiment of the present invention method for converting display device 2 from a front projection display device into a rear projection display device, reversing the sequence and effect of the steps in Figure 7. Although the steps represented in Figure 8 are presented in a specific order, the present invention encompasses variations in the order of steps. Furthermore, additional steps may be executed between the steps illustrated in Figure 8 without departing from the scope of the present invention.

[0029] Projector 12, supported in base 14 of display device 2 is concealed 32 within housing 8 of display device 2. In one embodiment, concealing 32 projector 12 within housing 8 includes pivoting rear projection screen 6 and housing 8 on base 14. In an alternative embodiment, concealing 32 projector 12 within housing 8 includes installing rear projection screen 6 and housing 8 onto base 14.

[0030] Housing 8 of display device 2 is expanded 34. Support structure 20 for mirrored surface 10 is expanded to align mirrored surface 10 with rear projection screen 6.

[0031] Additional optional steps may be implemented. For example, in one embodiment, lens 18 of projector 12 is adjusted 38 to focus on rear projection screen 6. In another optional step, an aspect ratio of projector 12 is adjusted 40 between 16:9 and 4:3.

[0032] The foregoing description is only illustrative of the invention. Various alternatives and modifications can be devised by those skilled in the art without departing from the invention. Accordingly, the present invention embraces all such alternatives, modifications, and variances that fall within the scope of the appended claims.